communities of "Gawdas", "Kunbis" and "Velip" were processed. Due to disagreement of the concerned agencies in respect of "Dhangar" community, this could not be taken up.

Autonomous councils for tribals

566. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposals seeking autonomous councils for tribals;

(b) if so, the action taken thereon;

(c) whether it is also a fact that there is a demand for stopping transfer of land to the non tribals in Scheduled Areas; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P.R.KYNDIAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. According to information received from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the proposal to include hill areas of Darjeeling District of West Bengal under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution is under examination.

(c) and(d) According to Schedule VII of the Constitution, the subject related to 'land' comes under the State List. Most of the States having Scheduled Areas have enacted laws regulating transfer from tribals to non-tribals. However, no specific demand for stopping transfer of land to the non-tribals in Scheduled Areas has been received in the Ministry.

Traditional rights in forests for tribals

567. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether tribals have not been given the traditional rights in forests including land and access to the minor forests products;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) by when a bill to give tribals these benefits is likely to be introduced in Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P.R. KYNDIAH):(a) and (c) The tenurial and access rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes in

respect of forest land, which they have been traditionally in-habiting for ages have not been adequately recognized under the existing rules and guidelines. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs was mandated to formulate a comprehensive Central Legislation to redress this historical injustice done to the forest dwelling tribal communities and for clear assertion of their legal rights on land and other traditional rights.

This Ministry accordingly prepared a draft "Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005" to provide a legislative frame for recognition of forest rights of the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes, in consultation with the concerned Ministries and other stakeholders. The draft Bill proposed to recognize such rights on land, minor forest produce, etc. of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes. The Bill was posted on the website of the Ministry seeking comments of the public and all stakeholders till 10.7.2005. The Ministry has received comments/suggestions from a large number of individuals/organizations, either supporting the Bill or opposing the same on various grounds. In the light of comments/suggestions received, the draft Bill has been further modified to reconcile the twin objective of undoing historical injustice done to the tribal communities with the concern for environmental protection. The proposed Bill is, however, still a tentative draft Bill and to be finalized as per the established procedure. No time frame can be indicated for its introduction in the Parliament.

The Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Rights) Bill

568. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD:
SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:

Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have finalized the draft of the proposed Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Rights) Bill;

(b) whether any major changes have been made in the original draft bill due to stiff resistance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, backed by the environmental activists/NGOs;

(c) whether Government would attempt to secure a consensus of both the environmental and human rights lobbies to steer through the bill during the Winter Session of Parliament; and